FREEDOM

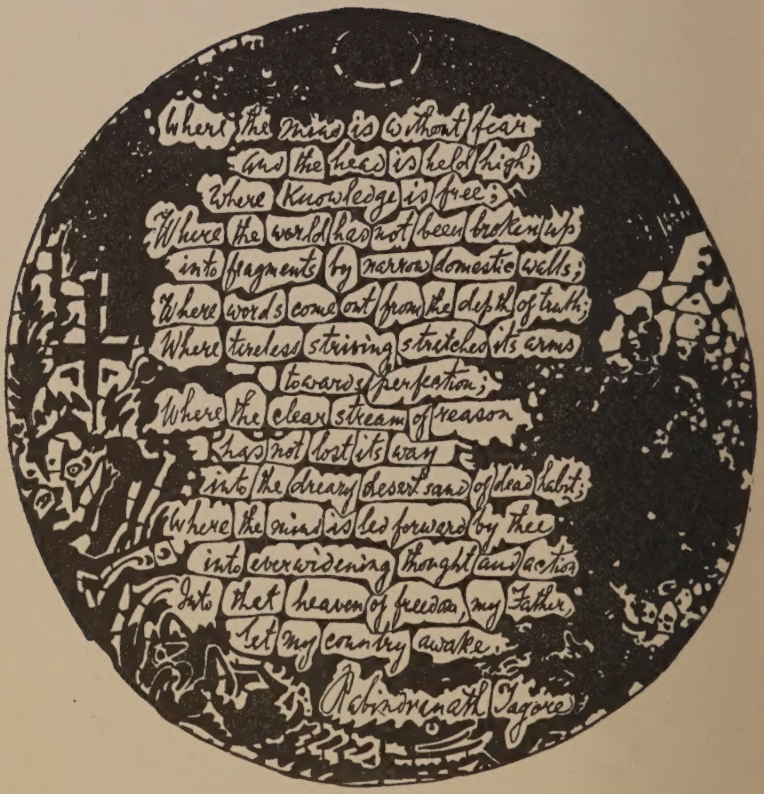
WELTHY HONSINGER FISHER

Gift of
Jerome B. Tupper

Accession No. ----------

Date ----------

FREEDOM


Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high;
Where Knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake.
Rabindranath Tagore

FREEDOM. *Poem and decoration by Rabindranath Tagore*

FREEDOM

A Story of Young India

By

WELTHY HONSINGER FISHER

AUTHOR OF

Beyond the Moon Gate, The Top of the World, A String of Chinese Pearls, ETC.

NEW YORK

FRIENDSHIP PRESS

DS
421
.F55
1930

MT20.3
F53
LOWER
LIBRARY

COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY
G. Q. LE SOURD

Printed in the United States of America

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY

CONTENTS

I. MOTHER LIVES BEHIND THE PURDAH 1

II. GOPAL MEETS MOTHER GANGA 16

III. GANDHI AND HIS SPINNING WHEEL 32

IV. NALINI'S HOLIDAY HAS A QUESTION MARK 43

V. A VILLAGE OF BOYS AND GIRLS 58

VI. A SCHOOL IN A GROVE 73

VII. A FUNERAL BY THE GANGES 84

VIII. NALINI FOLLOWS THE GLEAM 96

Meanings of Indian Words 111

20823

ILLUSTRATIONS

The cover and the illustrations for this book were drawn by art students at the Visva-Bharati, the poet Tagore's university at Shantiniketan. Mrs. Fisher visited the school, saw the students and teachers at work, told them of the book she was writing for the young people of America, and they offered to help her in its preparation by making drawings typical of Indian life.

NALINI *Cover*
By P. Hariharan

FREEDOM *Frontispiece*
Poem and decoration by Rabindranath Tagore

PEASANTS ON THEIR WAY TO A MELA 19
By V. S. Masoji

SARASWATI FESTIVAL ON THE GANGES 45
By V. S. Masoji

A BENGALI GENTLEMAN 69
By Prabhat Mohan Banerjee

YOUNG WOMEN STUDENTS REVIVE THE OLD DAGGER PLAY 77
By V. S. Masoji

THE HOUR OF MEDITATION AT SHANTINIKETAN 101
By V. S. Masoji

FREEDOM

Chapter I

MOTHER LIVES BEHIND THE PURDAH

FATHER was talking. Father was always talking. His fluent Bengali tongue was loosened and he rose to Himalayan heights as the dinner progressed. Gopal, his handsome sixteen-year-old son, slipped toward the wall, pushing his shining brass plate along with him. He leaned back against the wall with a sigh. This monologue of father's was as much to be expected as the summer monsoon, and as regularly it broke. The subject of the oration was mother, always mother. Manlike, father never looked at her while he was talking, and did not especially address her; it wasn't necessary. She knew and Gopal knew and Nalini, Gopal's sister, knew that the storm center of the family was mother's stubborn conservatism. She still clung to purdah. She had supposedly never been outside of her house since her marriage seventeen years before.

Mother continued to slip noiselessly in and out of the kitchen, bringing on the delicate *luchees* which she had made with her own hands. It had been a part of her conservative Brahman training to prepare these herself. Mr. Roy often admitted, when in a jovial mood, that he was fortunate above most men in the beautiful way in which his wife took care of him, but tonight he was not in a jovial mood.

Gopal had never been more tempted in all his sixteen years to break into his father's oration. Several times he started, then coughed, then took up his high brass goblet and took a leisurely drink of cold water. He showed his nervousness in the motion of his feet, adjusting them, turning them this way and that. Now he would lean on his knees, then again back against the wall. He was plainly embarrassed. He believed every word his father had said, for no one could attend the preparatory schools of Calcutta University and not believe in the foolishness of purdah. That was impossible. But he believed in his mother also. He knew her so well; he

knew the depths of her fatalistic acquiescence. He knew her sensitiveness. He had been brought up as a child in the apartments of the women when the family had lived in the country under the joint family system. He knew all the other women relatives of the family, every one of whom was in purdah, and he sensed the sure result of a family revolution in the hinterland of interior Bengal if mother should boldly throw off the veil and come out as father wanted her to do. All her life long mother had assented, assented to the customs of the women and men of her family, without reason. Understanding was not necessary for assent, and that is what her life had been—a quiet, flowing, unresisting stream of assent. "But," her husband argued, "why not assent now, when I ask you to do as the modern educated women of India are doing?"

Nalini noticed tears in her mother's eyes and knew that she was suffering. She looked a volume of understanding sympathy up into her mother's face. Mother pulled her *sari* over her forehead in order to cover her eyes, but father, as usual, did not notice it. He

was intoxicated with the new wine of progress, and the little family was getting the full benefit.

"For six years now I have been a justice on the bench, and my wife is still in purdah. When our children were babies and we were young, I thought it quite amusing that the mother of my children should never go out of the house, and that no other man should ever look at her face. But that was long ago. Our son is now sixteen years old and preparing for the university, and our girl is a young woman of fourteen years. You were married at that age, but you would be quite unwilling to have your daughter follow you in that."

Father himself was a blended mixture of Eastern and Western civilization. When he walked into his home from his long day at the court where he had been hearing and judging intricate and baffling cases, he looked for all the world like an American gentleman. His shoes were well made and highly polished, his gray suit was faultlessly tailored, his linen seemed as fresh as when he had started out in the morning. His walking stick gave

him an added dignity. He was the type of man who had fastidious taste in whatever style he chose to dress. His inherited breeding and restrained taste carried over into his choice of Western clothes and also into his choice of English vocabulary. He spoke the English language to the queen's taste. Many people who had heard him in both Bengali and English insisted that he was even more eloquent in the acquired language than in his native tongue.

Justice Roy's bent toward Western things and Western customs, however, was an inexplicable fact to his family and his fellow-justices. He had been brought up in the strictest of orthodox Hindu families. When he was a young lad he had been betrothed and when he was sixteen he had been married to a girl of fourteen who had come from a family similar to his own. To be sure, he had been educated abroad, yet many a man educated abroad permitted his wife to remain in purdah. But Justice Roy had a friend, a Christian barrister, and scarcely anyone outside the immediate circle knew what a great influence this man

had had upon his inner life. The barrister's father had been an associate of the Justice's father, both being Brahmans and orthodox, but in middle life Mr. Chatterji had renounced Hinduism and the social bondage of the Hindu system, and had become a Christian. He had been ostracized at once, and the two fathers had become widely estranged. But the boys had gone to the same school and been graduated from the same university. They had traveled abroad together, and upon their return had visited in each other's homes. When the Justice would go to Mr. Chatterji's home, he would be deeply impressed by the charm and grace and easy, self-possessed manner of Mr. Chatterji's Christian wife. After each visit he would go home thoughtful and determined to urge his wife to leave purdah and to come out to take her share, as did his Christian friend's wife, in the work of building a new India. Although Nalini and Gopal and their mother did not know it, the Justice had just come from such a visit today.

During his monologue at dinner, father often lapsed into English. Gopal was in-

wardly glad of this, for he knew his mother could get only a skeleton outline of what his father was saying. This would enable Gopal to fill in the details with his own emphasis. It was his habit always to soften the ideas so as to placate his mother, for he realized that no change in her attitude would come about. The boy's mind was torn with conflicting emotions. His father was right when he said that Indian social reformers pointed the finger of scorn at him, saying, "Behold a justice of the high court whose wife is in purdah!" So far as Gopal himself was concerned, his own friends never discussed it, and none of them ever asked about his mother. He gave little thought to his father's sensitiveness, but that his mother should have to suffer so much rebuke for that for which she did not seem at all to blame was a great anxiety to him, and to Nalini as well.

Following a knock at the door a barefooted servant brought in a card which father studied carefully. He then asked the servant to seat the guest in the library, and left the room.

His departure was a signal for release.

Mother threw back her *sari,* came immediately into the dining room, and sat on the mat with her son and daughter. As soon as she was seated, a woman servant brought her a shining brass tray filled with the dainty food which mother herself had prepared. Instant understanding and intimacy removed all restraint, and mother and children were at ease. The children had risen in well-mannered fashion when their mother entered the room, and naturally and easily crossed their feet and dropped to the floor as gracefully as a bird alights.

Nalini had an explosive sense of humor which loyalty to her mother kept in control while her father's presence pervaded the atmosphere. When he had gone she threw back her *sari* and let it fall upon her shoulder. This gesture exposed a finely shaped head, bobbed in the latest boyish cut and comfortable beyond expression.

"Gopie," she began, speaking to her brother and lapsing into English, "I am simply famished. I practised basketball all the afternoon. Tomorrow will be our annual drill

exhibition, and our school simply must take the prize cup or I shall bury my face in shame."

"Why should you feel so anxious about it? You are not running the show, and no doubt they could win very well without your superior help."

Nalini understood the sarcasm and replied disdainfully, "Indeed, Sir Gopal Roy, I would have you know that Nalini Roy is the captain of her team!"

Gopie, unwilling to show his surprise, kept his eyes cast downward, but said without emotion, "The lady captain should fast the day before such an athletic feat," and so saying, proceeded to snatch every hot *luchee* from the plate. Mother, however, understanding the teasing of her children and enjoying it as much as they did—indeed it was as though three children were there instead of two—gave a gesture to the servant, and in a few moments the captain of the team was rewarded not only with hot *luchees,* but other hot vegetables and fish as well. Then the conversation slipped back into Bengali. Mother, with the

first two fingers of her right hand, aided by the thumb, took every morsel of her food. Her left hand, according to her careful training, remained motionless in her lap throughout the meal. There was silence.

"My son, tell thy mother all that thy father has said, so that I may understand to the last full measure. He has quaffed the embittering cup of the reformer, and I, I am left to drain the cup. Is it not so? My children, my days are bewildered. We have left the joint home of your grandfather, and I am not trained in the new ways of the city and of the foreigners in the land. Only see the empty dining table yonder and those high empty chairs. When your father bought this house, he filled it with the furniture of the foreigner; it was because he was a justice, he said, and as he dressed in the clothes of the foreigner, so must he also have their tables and chairs, their forks and their knives. The servants were instructed to keep them clean; they polish the silver once a month, but after that it is put back into the darkness of the *almirah*. Father himself seems always to vacillate. In the morning he

will garland me with a love wreath, but after a day spent in the business world, where West and East meet here in our country, he seems hardened and comes home to chide me. And now comes the quarrel about the automobile. For quite a whole month that beautiful car has rested like a dead thing in the garage and none of us have been able to ride in it. Father says it is all my fault." She spoke like a child.

"You see, I will not ride in the car unless the purdah curtain is put up around the back seat, and father says that as a justice of the high court he will not be so disgraced, and he says furthermore that he will not use it without me. What can I do? Why can I not stay here in purdah in my own house? I attend to my family, I keep you all well and strong, I read my Bengali books, and I am happy. My mother lived her life in purdah, and so did my grandmother and her grandmother before her. Indeed they never left their husband's home after their marriage. Why should I go out on the streets and fight battles for other women? I do not know how. When father talks as he did tonight I know

that I am out of place. I should have lived two generations ago. Even now I would run away as silently and swiftly as a musk deer, but alas, I have not Nalini's training on the athletic field, and I should fall exhausted before I had gone one mile. Why should I be forced out? I am like a plague-rat hunted by the health officers: first the social reformers come, hunting statistics; then the women doctors come, telling me how injurious purdah is to the health. Once one of them advised me," and here she chuckled like a young girl, "to go and see my own daughter on the athletic field, and"—she hesitated, pointing her finger at Gopal—"if you promise never to tell father, I will confess to you both what I did on one occasion. It was Nalini's last basketball match. No one knows how I wanted to see her play, so I dressed myself up as a lower caste woman, took a carriage, and drove to the grounds. Once inside, I became frightened and slipped back to the rear seat, but I saw everything. I missed nothing. You looked like a goddess, my daughter, when you were running in search of that ball. I left my seat

three times to run out to help you catch it; my breath seemed to leave my body; I was taken outside of myself into heaven. It was paradise. But you see no one knew that I was I. It was simply a lower caste woman who was there."

The trio had become serious; it was a very real problem, this conflict of ideas between father and mother about the observance of purdah. "What *is* purdah, mother," Nalini asked quietly, "and why must women stay in it, once they are in? Is it a prison? In this house we talk about it so strangely."

"Thou hast asked a deep question, my child. Who knows the what or why or when of purdah? But I will tell you my own experience. When I was a little girl I lived in the women's part of the house, and never saw my brothers after I was nine years old—"

"Only think, Gopie," broke in Nalini, "of the teasing you would have been saved if you had not seen me since I was nine!"

"Well, there have been plenty of times when I have wished you had been behind a thick wall—especially when I was asking dad for a

new tennis racket or a bicycle or something. He always tells me, 'Your little sister has to have so many things that you will have to wait,' and so on." Before Nalini could make her usual retort her mother continued in Bengali:

"My grandmother used to tell us the history of purdah; she said that in the first place the word was a Moslem word, and as she deeply hated the Moslems and all their ways, she used to say that this custom would never have been taken over had it not been that our own men wished to protect their women from the Moslem ruffians. Once in a while I used to hear grandfather contradict her. He would say that after the Moslems came into power, the men of our family, like the men of all the best families, wished to secure the favor of their overlords, the Moslem emperors, and so they aped their customs to flatter them."

"Just as we ape the British in order to flatter them and incur their favor," said Gopal, with the fervid enthusiasm of the sixteen-year-old. "No stiff collars and coats for me, no foreign cloth and no stockings or shoes!" And to give

vent to his aroused passion of patriotism, he rushed over to the corner of the room and upset every one of the foreign dining chairs, one after another. It sounded riotous. Suddenly the door opened and father stood in the doorway.

Chapter II

GOPAL MEETS MOTHER GANGA

THE Delhi express was speeding out of the Howrah station. It was a suffocating night in April. The station had been filled with thousands of silent, lethargic people; they were scattered about the floor, trying to snatch a few moments of sleep. Scores of electric fans were going full blast, but the heat was so intense that these could not be felt. In one of the cars marked INT (meaning for intermediate class) sat Gopal. There were five other Indian men in the car, but he did not know any of them. Each one had a bunk, narrow and hard, and each one was busy spreading out his mat and sheet.

Gopal was on his way to Benares. He knew full well the measure of punishment being meted out to him. Physically he was just one generation removed from his father, but in point of ideas regarding their country he was distant ten thousand leagues. After all,

why should this idea of nationalism be such a wounding matter to his father? No doubt he, Gopal, might still have been in Calcutta tonight had he not expressed his disgust of all things foreign by tipping over his father's pet dining-room chairs—which, by the way, had never been used. It wasn't that Gopal disapproved of chairs and tables; he sat on benches at school and had always sat on them; but if India was going to adopt chairs and tables, why not say so, and then design some of its own and make them suitable? He had upset the chairs because he believed in his own expression of freedom, and he was willing to pay the cost. This exile to Benares was the cost. But father was certainly mistaken if he thought by sending him to the most conservative city in India he would become a reactionary. The orthodox Hinduism of grandfather would simply drive him nearer to the other camp.

Like many wealthy Bengali orthodox Hindus, Gopal's grandfather had built a house in the sacred city of Benares, where he was spending the last years of his life in worship,

and from which holy of holies he would pass on. There his body would be burned beside the sacred waters of Mother Ganga, and into the holy river his ashes would be scattered. Benares seemed to Gopal at first sight like one vast impregnable citadel of ancient Hinduism. His grandfather's house was simple, and built in the very heart of the overcrowded city; grandfather, like the majority of those who lived in Benares, was anxious to be as near the river as possible. His house was plain, but not without touches of beauty. On several of the walls were frescoes, done by one of his artist friends. The floors were highly polished and decorated. There were attractive niches in the wall where his books were kept.

He had only one servant, a Brahman who had been an institution in the family ever since Gopal's father was a child. The servant did not know his own age. Preparing the food had become a sort of cooperative service for servant and master. Their fare was simple to the point of asceticism. Daily at sunrise, regardless of heat or rain or fog, the old gentleman would leave the house, followed by his

By V. S. Masoji

PEASANTS ON THEIR WAY TO A MELA

servant, gather votive offerings for the river god on the way, and walk in silent meditation along the stone paved streets, down the long stone *ghats* to the river. The ceremonial bath occupied a large part of the morning. After that the old gentleman lingered at the *asrams* of the priests whose ministrations he specially enjoyed. He would listen to their Sanskrit prayers, ask them to paint the sign of Siva on his forehead, and then he would return to his home in a state of mystic religious exaltation. A light breakfast would follow, then more reading of his sacred books. Late in the afternoon he would go again to his favorite spot by the river, face the glowing water, and with rosary in hand pray for hours, long after the sunset glow had departed and the bathers had ceased to splash in the water.

It was into this home, or into this ascetic's *asram,* that Justice Roy had sent his growing son. Gopal incarnated, if any son of Bengal ever did, the spirit of young India, and young India at its best. The books he had read were the books that are read by young men and young women of the entire English-speaking

world. His thoughts paralleled those of the students of America and the West. His dreams were like those of young men everywhere, and his ambitions were high and noble. He was an omnivorous reader, and had a winsome quality for making friends—these friends of his in Calcutta would stand by him. Yet as he walked the narrow streets of the sacred city he felt smothered. Everywhere was the clanging of temple bells. Everywhere was the beggar's bowl held out for charity.

It plunged Gopal into deep thought. Religion and charity. Religion was good, of course, if it was pure; and charity was good; but charity did not solve the problem, and the youth of India must tackle the problems of India. That was the way he felt about it, and he wanted to prepare himself to help solve some of the problems of poverty and disease to be found in his overpopulated country. But his father simply did not understand his ambition, and as for his dear old grandfather, he, of course, could not sympathize with the young men of today. Gopal would be off at the university all day and would come back

only for his evening study, not even for his evening meal. His grandfather, he discovered immediately after his arrival, was a vegetarian of the strictest sort. He would eat no fish, no meat, not even an egg—nothing that involved the taking of life, even potential life. He lived on vegetables, milk and curds. Gopal did not care to wound this dear old saint, so he ate elsewhere. It would wound the old man too much to know that his grandson ate eggs, fish and meat, and especially beef. The flesh of the sacred cow! Gopal had no prejudices of any sort, and furthermore, he was of an experimental mind. Having found a meat diet harmless, energizing and agreeable, he had adopted it.

There were other things which Gopal could not reveal to his grandfather. That he was a meat eater was only one offence. The second was that he was not an orthodox Hindu; indeed, Gopal didn't know that he could be called a Hindu at all, so far as religion was concerned, although Hindu he would forever remain in point of language and culture. For Gopal had become a follower of Christ. He

was one of the many who had not yet been baptized—not that he had scruples against the sacrament of baptism; he realized that Christ himself had gone down to the river Jordan and had received baptism. But in India up to the present time baptism meant leaving one's relatives and one's culture and following the customs of another group. Gopal was determined to stay in his own group and live out the way of the Christ life right there among them. His father did not seem to object greatly to this; Gopal supposed it was because he knew that his son was leading a pure life so far as personal conduct went. But this radical idea of nationalism, or patriotism, or Gandhism, or whatever it was these upstarts called it, he simply would not tolerate under his roof. Gopal's father told him that his conservative but holy grandfather would probably bring him to his senses sooner than he could, and for that reason Gopal was to go to Benares. And his father's word was law in the household.

Gopal had sent on his academic credentials to the university before his departure, so that

his entrance into the classes proved a formal proceeding. He rather liked the atmosphere of the campus. It had freedom. He supposed there were plenty of students there who were studying Hindu theology, but he wasn't conscious of them and as yet they had not pestered him about his beliefs. He was relieved at that, though after he got his bearings he would enter into their discussions and relate his own inner Christian experience. He was sure of one thing—that that experience would stand the test. After his first long week in Benares he began to feel self-controlled enough to write letters. He had had no conversations with anyone during that week. His grandfather had treated him like a stranger—almost an alien; the students of the university had looked askance at him and he realized that they would continue to do so until they found out his family history, and he was determined that he would tell them nothing. The teachers and lecturers treated him indifferently; he was merely another student. But in his long walks and bus rides between the city and the campus he did much thinking,

and his only safety valves were his mother, whom he loved more than his life, and Nalini and the young men friends who would be loyal as the sun. His first letter to his mother—of course, in Bengali—was not a long one. A second one to Nalini in English was somewhat longer. It ran:

DEAR NALINI:

When the express left the Howrah station I felt that my heart had been left at home with you all in dear old Calcutta. I am sure you delivered my last message to mother at once. I did not close my eyes in sleep all night on the train. It was very hot, and there was only one fan for five of us, so you may know how little of the breeze I got; but it was not the heat that caused my sleeplessness. It was—well, what shall I call it? You know and I know only too deeply all about it. I do not yet understand why father thought I should be punished. I realize that I did a wildly foolish thing when I upturned all those pet dining-room chairs. But we all know that they are only a symbol in the house; we have

never used them, and in spite of father's English clothes he dines as every other Bengali gentleman does—on a mat on the floor. In my heart I think it is father's hatred for Gandhi that has frightened him as to my future. He heard that Gandhi was coming to Calcutta, and knowing my admiration for him and that all my associates were loyal adherents of Gandhi and of his program, it proved too much for him, and I was the victim. Never mind—our youth associations will never give up their program! We may change our methods, but our ultimate goal will lure us on until it is reached.

I can scarcely tell you how strange it is to be in grandfather's house. It can hardly be called a home; it is the *asram* of an ascetic. Grandfather does not eat even the white of an egg. He himself is merely skin and bone. He spends most of the hours of the day at the *ghats,* saying his beads and *mantras* and meditating in solitude. Late at night and often at daybreak I hear him singing his prayers.

The great joke on father is that I have found a group of students in this university

who are just as progressive as those in Calcutta. Father doesn't realize that young men are the same everywhere, and that our youth associations are in every great student center of the country.

It would make me so happy if some of you would write me that mother had decided to brave the whole army of relatives and go out in the car unveiled and without the curtain. It hurts me to think of her always in that stuffy house. I want my mother to live as long as I live, and it is my hope that some day she will be happy to live with me.

Your lonely brother,

GOPAL

P.S. I inclose six annas for the snake-charmer. I forgot to pay him the last time he came to the house. And we must keep him happy and anxious to come, as he is the best charmer in Bengal. Perhaps you have already paid him from your full purse, and if so, you have my undying gratitude. —G.

The group in which Gopal gradually found congenial companions was a mixed one—Mos-

lems, Jains, Hindus, Brahmos, and Christians. They were formed into a club for discussion only, and the subject was the same at every meeting: freedom. They called themselves the Group for Discussing Freedom. Sometimes it was freedom from old social customs; again, from the slavery to the *zamindar* system; sometimes freedom from industrial slavery, freedom from religious bigotry, freedom from imperialism. These young men met usually under a large pipal tree on the campus. They felt confined when they sat within four walls, they said, especially when they were discussing that particular subject of freedom. They must be out under the sky, under the shade of a noble tree that had life and was growing. They could not afford to be static, nor to have their lives nor the life of their country arrested in growth, and so growth and beauty and freedom must be about them as they talked and thought. It was a fascinating company. The young men had gentle faces and well modulated voices. Most of their talk was in English. There was little argument, as each one had come into the

group because he had no prejudices and was a lover of freedom. So they talked constructively.

Gopal was forgetting his loneliness, and almost forgetting his grandfather's life, it was so far removed from his own. He wrote to Kumar, one of his Calcutta friends:

DEAR KUMAR:

There is one thing that pleases me tremendously about this place: sweepers' sons and Brahmans' sons sit in the same classroom. Caste is absolutely breaking down, even here. So the things we have heard about this place are not true.

Last night there was a big mass meeting of the depressed classes, and our prexy presided over it. That's moving some, isn't it? I will tell you all about it in my next. Talk about new ideas! Whew! I should think these old temples and the idols in them would be so shocked by the things these chaps say that they would crack and fall into the river. To be sure, we all have a good time here in this fine old town, but as for taking any stock in

the old stuff, why, we simply don't. Some day I'll write about the Sharavati festival. I fell off the boat into the river while helping the boys throw the idol in, and it is a good thing I had learned to swim in my early days, else I would have gone suddenly on to another transmigration. If you see dad, you might intimate to the Justice that I am not an ascetic, even though grandfather is, and I cannot live on six annas per day.

Yours for the new day,

GOPE

Chapter III

GANDHI AND HIS SPINNING WHEEL

"BONFIRE! Bonfire! Gandhi's bonfire!" The cry swept through the streets and school halls of Calcutta as the cry of Paul Revere swept to "every Middlesex village and farm." It was not the fire for the burning of bones or corpses, as the origin of the word implies, nor was it a fire around which would be sung happy camp songs. It was a fire for the burning of shirts of foreign cloth in the public square. The notice of the bonfire had been whispered about for weeks before the coming of Gandhi the Mahatma. As soon as the signal was given, young men began to come through byways, through lanes. Bus after bus unloaded literally thousands of young men; tram after tram stopped near the square and poured more hundreds into the already crowded space. Each person carried a shirt and threw it into the fire—all of the cloth had been made in a foreign country. Policemen

came in swarms, thinking that perhaps this was the beginning of a revolution. But they went away disappointed; it was a group of young men with an idea that did not need guns to express it, though it did require fire to advertise it.

Old men shook their heads. "That is the way," they said, "the young men lose their reason, as Gandhi has lost his."

"Never had any, in fact," added a maturer voice.

"What was that?" shouted a young man. "I do not know who you are, but whoever you are you will have to take back that remark. We did not invite anyone here who was not interested in a great patriotic ideal for his country, and evidently you cannot recognize one when it is placed before you."

The older man was silent and walked away. The older man was Justice Roy. He walked on without speaking to his companion who, like himself, was dressed in the latest Western fashion. "I am glad Gopal is not here," he thought; "not having any of his own shirts that were made by foreign hands, he would

probably have brought some of mine to add to the flames. But what a foolish idea it is," he mused, "and what a reckless gesture to make in a country where there is so much poverty and where shirts are at such a premium. Think of the thousands of sweepers right in this city who would have been made happy by the gift of a shirt. Gandhi is always saying that he thinks first of the depressed classes—why didn't he think of them today, and not allow all this good cloth to be burned? They have lost their heads, all of them." Justice Roy was a man who could be depended upon never to lose his head. It was firmly fixed, and indeed, almost immovable. Gopal had found that out long ago, and many a juryman had discovered it as well.

The next morning Justice Roy was greatly surprised to find a request from his political associates that he secure an interview with Gandhi, and report his impressions and his appraisal of the movement. This was a great blow. He prided himself on being an Indian through and through, but he had resolved never to hear Gandhi; he read his

speeches in the newspapers, and that was enough. It was a "garbled lot of sentiment." Now he was asked to go down on to Theater Road, where the man was being entertained, and see him personally. He would scarcely know what to say to him. Justice Roy was perfectly at ease in the presence of an English governor, and even an English viceroy; he felt he understood them. He was at home at a Government House garden party, where he had to go without his wife, of course; but then, no one who knew Indian etiquette thought that strange; he felt protected by the tradition of purdah. At these functions he was faultlessly dressed in his high silk hat, his braided morning coat, his pin-striped trousers, his white spats, his suede gloves, and a walking stick to top it off. Once he tried a monocle, but only once. But now he was to go and see Gandhi; that was so different. He felt immediately that he would be ill at ease; plainly they had nothing whatever in common, save that they were both Indians. But alas, India was a continent, and how different Indians could be, and were!

The Justice steeled himself for the affair, and after making the plans, and receiving from Gandhi a friendly reply saying that he would be glad to see him at eleven-thirty, he started out in a taxi. He arrived on time to the minute, and was received by a handsome young man who knew his name and who was exceedingly deferential. He ushered him into the vestibule, saying that Mahatmaji was expecting him and he might go in at once. To his great amazement he found the floor covered with white mats, and he knew instinctively, as an Indian, that he should remove his shoes; the young man had not said a word as to whether he should or should not. The Justice was ill at ease. He leaned against the wall, untied his shoe laces, took off his well shaped shoes, and went in, silk-socked.

He found Gandhi alone, seated on a low cushion with his spinning wheel in front of him. He arose, took the right hand of his visitor in both of his, looked at him with that never-to-be-forgotten expression of friendship, and said, "I am so glad to meet Gopal's father!"

"But I—er—haven't come to talk about my son, er—I—" Justice Roy kept wondering how on earth Gandhi had ever heard of that young boy, his son; how far had Gopal gone in this thing, anyway? This put more queries into his head, and he had to rally his concentration to come to the main issue.

"Be seated, Justice Roy," said Gandhi with perfect poise, and saw to it that Mr. Roy was comfortable before taking his own seat. This was where he had been when Mr. Roy came in, just behind the little spinning wheel. Since it was Justice Roy who had sought the interview, the Mahatma allowed him to proceed while he went on with his spinning. Gandhi was dressed as usual, in the coarse white homespun cloth of his own weaving or that of some of his *asram* at Ahmedabad. His bare feet helped him to pick up the wayward threads beyond arm's reach. His Indian sandals were outside the door beside the Justice's shoes.

"Why doesn't that man stop spinning?" thought Mr. Roy. "I have read in the newspapers that he does this in all of his spare

hours, but I thought that was newspaper talk; I never dreamed it was carried to such length." Justice Roy could think of nothing else so long as that wheel went round and round in front of him. It disgusted him; it nettled him; it made him self-conscious; finally it so angered him that he requested his host to stop. All that had been pent up in his emotions now came out.

"You have studied as much law as I have, Mr. Gandhi" (it was hard to get out the *Mr.* because no one ever spoke of him as Mr. Gandhi; it was invariably either Gandhi or Mahatma), "and it's beneath your dignity to be sitting around on the floor like this, spinning cotton. If you want to fight the British government, why not stand right up and say so, and go out like a man and fight?"

"But that is where you are grossly mistaken, my Indian brother. I have no desire to fight the British government. I am not fighting anybody. When I burn foreign cloth in the streets I am working for the millions of my brothers and yours, Justice Roy, who live in our villages. When they have finished their

work in the rice fields, they can spin on a wheel like this and make all the cloth that their village requires without having to sell the rice, which they should have for food, in order to buy a few garments. I am not against the British, but I am for my Indian brothers. War, my brother, will never settle anything; war is always wrong. Killing nine million of the fine young men of the world in the last war did not set the world forward one inch. What did it do for India? Nothing. What did it do for England? It brought her only sorrow, and she is still suffering. Religion expressed by love is the only force that will set the world forward. This is an expression of love, Justice Roy," and he looked affectionately at the little *charkha,* "because it has already brought self-respect and help to hundreds of thousands of our brothers. Burning foreign shirts on the square the other day didn't hurt anyone. It was the expression of an idea.

"Every night when I walk down that beautiful Maidan yonder I see great blazing electric light signs flashing out that all may see, 'Buy Scotch Whiskey.' The burning of that

electricity costs as much in a few months as our bonfire cost, and think of the sorrow and degradation whiskey is bringing to our people. Have you been to investigate *that,* my brother? No, the people are far off the track who think me a fanatic. It is a religion expressed in love that will bring heaven to earth, and it is the only kind of justice, Mr. Judge, that will be lasting. Will you allow me to be personal? Let us take your clothes, for example. Your collar, your tie, your suit, your stockings, and, I suppose, your shoes, though I have not seen them, were all imported; duty was paid on every one of them; no Indian hand had an opportunity to help make them and thereby earn an honest living. They are as far removed from Indian life as the language we are speaking—that is why I am persuading my countrymen to make Hindi the *lingua franca.* Could you yourself help a villager with one of his problems? No, you are as far removed from him as his *zamindar* overlord, or a king. Until these hands of ours, that have written briefs, can work to show

the depressed people a way out and up, and show them that we are brothers, we shall never have a country."

Justice Roy knew that the time allowed for his visit was long since gone, but he was fascinated by this vast mind and the heart in that frail body. What a soul the man had! One had to admit it; sincerity rang out with every word. He seemed never to use one more word than was necessary. Not a syllable for effect! Justice Roy guessed that at last he understood why the students followed Gandhi so blindly —or so openly.

He bowed himself out as best he could, and put his shoes on. Before he had finished tying the laces he heard the little whirr of the spinning wheel. Gandhi was again at work.

As soon as Mr. Roy reached his home he went to his room and shut himself in for hours. When he came out he was dressed as a Bengali gentleman. He had a graceful shawl thrown over his shoulders like a Roman toga, a white *dhoti,* and his feet were bare. His wife was greatly surprised to find him in

these clothes, but the only excuse he gave her was, "They are much more comfortable, and I am very tired."

He ate his meal in silence. Nalini was very late that day, and her mother said nothing to her father about the letter that had come from Gopal.

Chapter IV

NALINI'S HOLIDAY HAS A QUESTION MARK

INDIA is a land of holidays. Government and three great religions vie with each other in declaring holidays, much to the delight of the boys and girls of the schools. The more religions, the more holidays. There are the Christian holidays, the greatest of these at Christmas, which gives two weeks, lasting over New Year's Day. Then there is Easter, which gives another four days. The Moslem holidays, too, are numerous, the greatest and longest being the Moharram, which is celebrated for ten days. At this time thousands of yards of cloth are spread out on the Maidan, the central park of Calcutta, and tens of thousands of Moslems go there for prayer at that time; the little Moslem boys on the streets are dressed in gay-colored pajamas, and wear velvet caps richly embroidered in gold thread. Then there are the three major Hindu festivals, the Durga *puja,* the Holi festival, and

Diwali. During the Diwali festival most of the houses in India light up the outline of their doorways, roofs and gateways with thousands of little oil lights set in saucers, giving the same general effect achieved in the West by outlining buildings with electric bulbs.

All these festivals and holidays become the common interest of the school boys and girls of India; and because religions are taken so seriously, government and business have to take some recognition of all of them, with the national ones to boot. The great Hindu festivals are taken leisurely, and among the old aristocratic families of Bengal are celebrated in their chaste and original meaning.

It was in the autumn at the festival of Durga, the one period of the year when the branches of the Roy clan were accustomed to assemble. The family journeyed back to the old home in Dacca, whence they had all come except Nalini and Gopal, who had been born in Calcutta. Nalini feared these family gatherings. She sensed the power of mass family opinion after they had been in session

By V. S. Masoji

SARASWATI FESTIVAL ON THE GANGES

two days, and this *puja* would last four. One thing that greatly relieved her was the fact that Gopal wrote his mother that he would surely be there. Not that he wanted to go to the feast, but he wanted to see his mother. Then, too, grandfather would be scandalized if he should stay away. And although Gopal was a great tease when they were alone, Nalini knew that he would be dependable as a mountain if any personal difficulty should come to her.

And Nalini feared a difficulty. On her next birthday she would be fifteen years old. She knew that every aunt and uncle and cousin, every great-aunt, great-uncle and great-cousin would be horrified when they found that no husband had been selected for her. Most of them would cry to high heaven for forgiveness that she was unmarried at this late age, but not to have a husband even selected—that was intolerable, and would have to be remedied before the clan dispersed. She had heard enough family conversations to know that a crisis in her life was bound to come and that it would come soon.

Nalini was obliged to write a theme for her English composition class on the subject of Durga *puja*. She read the original story of Durga with a great deal of care but with small comfort. She looked at Durga's picture without a thrill. The story ran that when Rama needed strength to fight Ravana the king, he worshipped Durga the goddess of strength. But he found that Durga could give her blessing of strength only to those who could conquer all their passions and all the hindrances to a good life. As a symbol that his animal passions were killed, Rama brought the goddess the blood of a slain goat; as a symbol that his lethargy no longer existed, he brought her the blood of a slain lamb; as a symbol that obstinacy was conquered, he brought her the blood of a slain buffalo. And so it went. Down through the story Nalini read, and learned that Rama finally received the blessing of Durga and conquered the king Ravana. Toward the end of this particular festival each member of a family patches up any quarrel which he may have had with any other member, so that in the final feast on the fourth day

there is a restored harmony, and the blessing of Durga rests on the united members of the clan. This is called the Meeting Together in Victory.

Nalini and her mother left for Dacca two days ahead of the other members of the family. Justice Roy would be obliged to remain to greet his father at the railway station; filial devotion demanded it, even though the old man would be accompanied by Gopal.

The future of Nalini Roy was hanging in the balance. She divined it, and her mother confessed it as well. The two had talked over their plan and what their method of approach to the country relatives would be, during the long painful days of the feast. In the first place Nalini had let her hair remain uncut for months, so that she could roll up a little knob in the small of her neck. She looked for all the world like a young woman who had always had long hair. She helped out the size of the knob considerably with some hair that had been saved from the first clipping, oiled it all and parted it in the middle, and kept her *sari* over her head as much as

possible, so that the inquisitive aunts would not look too closely. She dreaded these days, but she would play her part. Immediately upon arriving she would conform to old-fashioned ways. She would fill her father's *hookah,* and try to be like all the other country relatives, though she knew she would be a mere actress and would never play this part in real life.

But now there was another serious drama going on, and she was one of the chief performers. Nalini had heard that she was being discussed by the men relatives after their feast was over as they sat about smoking their *hookahs.* Gopal was her faithful reporter.

"Now, Nalini, I want to warn you that those old birds in there are determined to get you married off, or at least your betrothal signed and sealed before this feast is over; and this is one place where dad's eloquence falls through their ears as water does through a sieve. The Roys are all orators, remember; it runs in the blood; so dad doesn't make any special show here at all. Why, you wouldn't think you belonged to dad at all, to hear them

talk; you simply belong to the Roy tribe. You are rather like a piece of family jewelry to be given to some young man—I think the chap is some distant relative or other. I'll tell you, sis, and I'm promising you right here, that if it can't be done any other way, I'll disguise you as a boy and we'll run away together. They even want to saddle a wife on to me! I told them that when I wanted a wife I'd let them know, but that it would be a good many more Durga feast days hence than they had fingers and toes. I told them I had other duties to my country for the next ten years, and perhaps forever. I didn't have their eloquence, but I had so many facts about children and disease and poverty that their hair almost turned white."

"Gopal, it is so difficult to describe the petty chatter that goes on at the women's feast. I have just come away from it. You were there when you were a little boy, but you were a pet then, loaned to them, as it were. I am there as a real part of it, a fourteen-year-old girl who is shamelessly unmarried. The fact that there is no husband planned for me has

simply made their tongues wag the whole day long. When I walk across the floor their eyes follow me. I try to serve them in the meekest, most respectful fashion. I keep my eyes on the floor when I am wild to throw back my head and run away. Then the feast finishes, and they sit about eating *pan*—that everlasting, horrid *pan!*"

Three days of the festival had passed and Nalini was still free. Today, however, feelings were tense. Father didn't seem to have the courage to put his foot down and take his daughter away, thus ending the discussion. Family loyalty superseded even the deep affection he held for his daughter. He was helpless in the face of the age-old tradition. But Nalini's mother, though still in purdah, fought these women like a tigress. She described to them what the life of a present-day schoolgirl was. She told them what women were doing and especially what Indian women were doing. Nalini was amazed at her mother's knowledge of facts, and at her courage. She had evidently forgotten nothing that Nalini or Gopal had ever told her. She had

bottled it up during the year and had now taken out the cork, and there was an explosion such as these *purdahnasins* had never heard before. She even refused to see the young man they proposed to marry to her daughter. She never intended to have her daughter follow in her footsteps, and she would tell them so with no uncertain emphasis.

Nalini felt that she was saved, and relaxed in the thought. No sooner had she begun to feel at ease than the report came in from the men's side of the house that Nalini's betrothal was announced, and the ceremony would take place the next day. Her father, then, had weakened. And she? She was broken-hearted. She was the victim. She was not loved for her own sake, she was planned for in accordance with a tradition, regardless of herself.

Gopal had not been present at the closing hours of the men's feast, so he had missed the announcement of his sister's betrothal. But as soon as he returned he heard it on every side, and it silenced him. The saddened young man refused to see or speak to anyone

for the moment; he wished to think and to pray, and to plan his line of action. So he walked out into the farther grove and paced back and forth under the heavy shade of the mango trees. His heart was breaking for Nalini and especially for his mother, for he knew that it was her life's ambition that her daughter should have every opportunity that had been denied to her. But he must not waste his precious time on vicarious sympathy. He knew that if any action were taken, it must be taken at once. His mind moved rapidly. First he would inquire as to the exact status and degree of relationship of the young man. It seemed that he was not there, therefore he must be a very distant relative. A new idea came to Gopal. It might be that the young man was as forward-looking as he and Nalini. He straightened up, walked back with determined steps into the house, and found those men who knew the young man well.

In less than a half hour Gopal was off on his bicycle, bound for the village in which the Mukerji boy lived. He suspected that even so he would not be the first to impart the news of

the betrothal, for he knew the wireless speed of gossip. No one had as yet left the Roy clan, to his knowledge, and yet Gopal surmised that the young man had heard all about it. The roads were dusty, and the motor buses stirred such clouds of dust that after a bus had passed, it was often five minutes before he could see the road again. This made the journey difficult. The heavy dust also changed his appearance from that of a city student to that of an unkempt villager.

Just as he was entering the Mukerji homestead through the brick gate that was crumbling to pieces because of the sturdy chatim tree growing up within it, he met the young man he had come to see. The two introduced themselves, and found immediate respect and mutual response. Gopal was deeply relieved. He spoke lightly of his appearance, and asked apologetically for a bath. Nanda Lal was also a bicycle rider, and knew from experience what these country roads were like. Most of the time the rider had to be off his bike, waiting on the side of the road for the clouds of dust to settle. Would bicycle riders and

pedestrians and bullock carts ever have a road where they might have some rights? The rights, now, were all to the swift. They supposed, if they drove motor cars of their own, they would feel quite differently about it, for then the clouds of dust would always be behind them.

Gopal came out from his room a new creature. A shampoo and a bath and fresh clothing made him quite ready to talk about the matter that had brought him to this homestead.

"Just before I went to my room," said Gopal, "we were saying that the drivers of the cars didn't feel troubled about the roads because the clouds were behind them; other people were left to worry through. I have been thinking about that ever since, and I believe that is the way it is with our social customs. The generation that makes them does not have to worry much about them, for the clouds of trouble and sorrow that they cause are left behind, to be felt by the succeeding generation. I have just come from the feast of our clan, and they have announced the en-

gagement of my sister—" He was not allowed to finish his sentence, for Nanda Lal broke in and told him that he had just heard the news from his father. He felt the sympathy of young Gopal, and sputtered forth his own views on the whole subject. What need had he for a wife? What should he do with one? He was just seventeen years old, and entering the university. He was a young man of the twentieth century: he repeated it—the twentieth century—with emphasis.

The young man could not speak too strongly to suit Gopal; it was balm to his ears. He sat forward to listen, thinking he would carry every word back to Nalini. Gopal waxed so eloquent about his sister that it was Nanda Lal's turn to lean forward to listen. And in a few minutes Nanda Lal said, "I shall return with you." And so saying, he told the servant to bring the two bicycles, and soon the two young men were cycling down the dusty road on a new adventure.

Chapter V

A VILLAGE OF BOYS AND GIRLS

A NEW principal had come to the Brahmo High School which Nalini and her friends attended. She was a Christian, and she seemed to take pains to have everyone know it. The students, girl-like, gave her a thorough testing, and after a few weeks of it agreed that Miss Sen was the best sport that had ever occupied the principal's chair. She had bobbed hair, and thereby shocked many matrons, but also thereby asserted her freedom. She would maintain her poise and dignity by her mind and manners, she argued, and not by the length of her hair and the amount of oil on it. She granted the same freedom to her students; they need not wear a uniform unless they chose. Some were there in *saris* of *khaddar,* some in heavy silk ones, and some in the cheapest of cotton. Most of them wore simple sandals on bare feet, but when a girl wearing leather shoes entered, Miss Sen would warn

them against looking down upon her, and would urge fair play to all.

Nalini's permission to return to school had been a miracle. For days it seemed as though the powerful opinion of the united aunts, uncles, and cousins would prove overwhelming, and she would be obliged to go the way of her feminine ancestors for a thousand years. But Gopal never gave up. And then, too, there was Nanda Lal. Thank God, he was a young man after her own heart. How she wished she had been allowed to see him. Was he tall or short? What kind of voice and what kind of features did he have? In the years that lay ahead she would of course be obliged to marry him. That was settled, without further debate, by the laws of the family. But he himself had sworn to Gopal that he would not think of marrying for ten years. She adored all the ideas he had expressed to her brother, and Gopal himself would have her undying gratitude.

Nalini was not the light-hearted girl who had left these halls for the Durga holidays. It seemed to her that she had become a seri-

ous-minded woman in the course of those ten days. Her mother had become her devoted chum, to whom she reported every event of the day, important and unimportant. Her mother was developing a cough, a condition which troubled Nalini greatly, but to which she seldom referred. She realized now that her mother would never leave purdah; that she was living her own life in the life and activities of her daughter only made Nalini's responsibilities the greater. She brought home to her mother the amusing details of the day and the pleasant fun of school life.

Mrs. Roy had come to know the particular qualities of character of each of her daughter's teachers and of each of her friends. Her memory was like a phonograph record; she never lost a detail. When students would come over to the Roy home, she would treat them as though they were old friends. She needed no introduction to them. When her husband was out on tour for a few weeks, she would invite Miss Sen to spend the week-end in their home; she deliberately deprived her husband of this guest because she wanted to

have the conversation entirely in Bengali. Thus she had Principal Sen to herself and grew to love and admire her. Miss Sen was so full of life. She talked about herself in the most amusing fashion, and about her everyday life among the students, and when she would recite for an hour at a time her experience as a student in Lucknow, Nalini's mother would laugh until she wept. She had never known before what it was to lose herself in laughter. Miss Sen was so unlike the picture of a Christian she had had since early childhood. It was the picture of a crude, brazen woman with none of the feminine graces. But Miss Sen seemed to have all that any Brahman woman ever possessed, with independence and vitality added.

When the time of the Holi festival came and there were to be a number of school holidays, Miss Sen invited Nalini to go with her to the *mofussil,* where she was to visit friends. The principal had so won the heart of the mother that both parents acquiesced in the desire of their daughter to accept. The days of the festival were spent mostly in Asansol and

its environs. Although Nalini was an Indian, she had seen very little of the country in India. City born and bred, she had been deprived of the sight of some of the loveliest and some of the ugliest scenery to be found anywhere in the world. What she saw at Asansol was at once a revelation and a challenge.

They had left Howrah station, Calcutta, at eleven in the morning and arrived at Asansol a little after two in the afternoon. At that hour the heat was stifling. Not a breath of air was stirring. Nalini looked about for the city. All she saw was a desert waste. She had heard that this was a rich city full of large, ugly steel mills. It had been likened to a city called Pittsburgh in America. But where was the city? She looked again in vain. The young American missionary and his wife who had come to meet Miss Sen expressed pleasure at meeting Miss Roy and gave her a cordial welcome. This was the first time Nalini had ever heard herself called Miss Roy. She said it over again, trying to get accustomed to the sound.

The little company now hopped into the shining new Ford car, while the servant took the luggage to one of the many horse carts waiting at the foot of the station stairs. Miss Sen, as usual, talked continuously, but everyone enjoyed it, for she was always interesting. They drove through the business street of the town which Nalini thought little better than a village. After a drive of a mile and a half they came within sight of the mission. There was no sign to tell what it was; that was strange, Nalini thought. But just as they were about to drive between two mud posts she saw the sign, Ushagram. She repeated it to herself. Then the meaning came to her—a village of the new day; as she said it they were driving through the most interesting village of mud houses she had ever dreamed of.

A school village! How clean it was and how attractive! The girls were cooking their food. What fun! And from that moment Nalini was entranced by this new type of school. The schools in her experience were for the most part large city schools, with dormitories three stories high, and these were the

only schools she had supposed she could respect. To be sure, she had seen the little run-down-at-the-heel village schools where the three R's were taught occasionally, or as often as the teachers had word that the inspectress was coming. Inspectresses had told her as much. But Nalini's imagination had never pictured a school like this. While the students were attending school they were also administering a village. The boys and girls were managing their own bank, with fictitious money, of course, as well as their own post office. The discipline of the school was vested in a dignified *panchayat,* that august body of five elders which every villager in India respects. In Ushagram, however, the *panchayat* was not composed of white-whiskered elders, but of boys and girls chosen by themselves from among their number because of their trusted Christian character.

The spirit of Ushagram deeply impressed Nalini. Its enthusiasm, its practical experiments, its desire for service, made it quite different from any school she had known be-

fore. And it was not until early the next morning that she discovered the secret. There at that simple service of worship, where Indian hymns were sung and prayers uttered not in Sanskrit but in Bengali, she felt an all-pervading atmosphere that was new to her. It was her first experience in Christian worship.

Miss Sen's American friends were keenly interested in life. They knew more of the actual conditions of the workers in the steel mills and the mines, it was said, than the people who had lived among them knew. Miss Sen was a student of sociology and was preparing lectures to give to her students on the social conditions of village life in Bengal; city girls knew so little of country life that she had to keep the needs of the rest of India constantly before them. They would all make the pilgrimage to the mills and the mines, and then to the villages where the workers lived, if one could call it living. It would be better to go at night, for then not only was it cooler and more endurable to be near the heat of the

furnaces, but one got a more dramatic impression.

After an interesting Bengali dinner, where the Americans sat on the floor and wore Bengali clothes, the group started out in the car. The top had been taken down and they rode under the canopy of heaven; Orion, Canis Major, and Scorpio fascinated them for a few minutes, until the blasts of the furnaces lighted up the surrounding country and demanded their attention. The car drove over some rutty roads, and finally the little company alighted, to walk the remaining distance. They needed no electric flash, for the entire countryside was like day with the light from the burning slag. They walked over to see the furnace and the hot, glowing slag that was being emptied out on to the hillside. As they approached nearer they saw the individual men at work, lighted up in silhouette against the glow. They learned that the men who were at work under such risk were receiving twelve annas a day. Turning from the steel mills, they drove toward the villages of the miners, for Asansol has many coal

mines, and most of the miners are men and women from the Santal Parganas.

Nalini was deeply interested in art, and she had admired many paintings of the Santalis, especially the Santal women. She had idealized them as being scrupulously clean, and free as well—no purdah among the Santalis! She had seen spotless, shining villages in the Parganas. These filthy villages they were passing now could not possibly be presided over by Santal women! Yet they were.

"Am I actually looking at the men who mine our coal?" queried Nalini. The American stopped one of the men, who was carrying a child of three in his arms. Every man in the village seemed to be drinking *maud*. There was a government-licensed liquor shop at the end of the village, and the entire group was assembled about it. The shop offered them all they could drink for a half day's wages, and most of them were taking advantage of the offer. The baby had drunk one bowl, the father said, and now he would buy a little something for him to eat. It was plain that the child was completely intoxicated.

Not having money enough for food to satisfy the child's hunger, the father had first intoxicated him with liquor.

They drove back to Ushagram, saddened. Nalini was never to forget that night. Long after the lights were out she lay wide awake under her mosquito net, thinking, and seeing again the sights of those hours. "Today I have looked for the first time into the face of a coal miner. I have looked into the face of a drunken child. I have looked into government-licensed liquor shops. I have looked into the type of school which, if it were used on a vast scale, would save my country and my people." Then the light of the molten steel flashed before her eyes, and at the thought of it she straightened up in bed. "That terrible light blinded my eyes," she thought, "but it entered my soul and melted it. O God," she cried out in prayer, "not only has that molten light become steel; I, too, have become as steel in my purpose to prepare myself to serve my people, to free them—to free them!"

When she arose the next morning to prepare

By Prabhat Mohan Banerjee

A BENGALI GENTLEMAN

for her *chota hazri,* there was a letter awaiting her, addressed in her mother's handwriting. Excusing herself, she opened it and read eagerly. There were usually tears in Nalini's eyes when she read letters from her mother, for everything she wrote had a tender pathos in it that called forth both gentleness and sympathy from her children. There were two things, Nalini saw, that seemed to her mother important. The first was the decided change that had come over father. He spoke little when he was in the house. He had sent for Gopal's tailor. This must have hurt his pride, though he said nothing about it, for in the old days he had seemed to revel in ridiculing both Gopal's clothes and the tailor who made them. Now when the tailor arrived he was instructed to buy nothing but *khaddar;* the Justice would prefer that made at Gandhi's *asram,* if possible, but *khaddar* at all costs. He had left off wearing his foreign shoes and his silk stockings. He had given up stiff collars; there was a huge drawer full of them, all varieties and shapes, lying quite useless. And there were neckties by the dozen. Mother wondered

what use could be made of them. Did Nalini have any suggestion that could be made without hurting father's feelings?

Nalini's eyes leaped over to the last paragraph, which ran: "Nanda Lal has been spending the week-end with us, and he is almost despondent over the fact of your absence. It is very dull here without you. Do not let Miss Sen and her friends bewitch you."

A second letter received from Calcutta, addressed in Gopal's handwriting, made Nalini decide to leave this happy place and return to her home. Miss Sen, having much work to do in preparation for the beginning of school, decided to accompany her.

Chapter VI

A SCHOOL IN A GROVE

SHANTINIKETAN, or the Abode of Peace, is a school that holds a unique place in cultured India. It is situated about one hundred and fifty miles north of Calcutta, near the town of Bolpur. In this beautiful grove of trees of many Indian varieties is a university, the Visva-Bharati, where one may study various languages, religions, and philosophies; in fact, world knowledge and world culture are to be found there. In addition to the university, there is a college preparatory school, and below that there is the higher primary school. The presiding genius and the pervading spirit of the place is the great poet, Rabindranath Tagore. Here he has his home; and here he lectures to the students, here he writes his poems and dramas, and here in the heart of beautiful Bengal he sets his poetry to music.

The place was discovered and dedicated by the poet's father, Devendranath Tagore. He

went there to find a place of meditation away from the noisy city, and at the sunset hours he would find himself daily drawn to a quiet spot under a group of chatim trees. Here he would talk to God, and would spend much time in listening to God's voice. After his death his son felt that the only fitting memorial to so spiritual a father would be something that would help boys and girls, young men and women, to attain the higher life, and so it is that the poet has year by year seen his dreams for this school come into fulfilment. At the Chatim Tala, which means, under the shade of the seven-leaf tree, at the prayer place of his father, who was lovingly named the Sacrificer by his friends, the poet has placed a marble seat for prayer and meditation. Over the seat are the words with which his father had so often ended his prayers:

Thou art the Comfort of my life,
Thou art the Joy of my mind,
Thou art the Peace of my soul.

There is no hard and fast rule about uniforms, but most of the boys wear a garment of

saffron color, and the girls wear sometimes a *sari,* or in the winter a shawl of that same color to keep them warm in their out-of-door classes. One of the prettiest sights in the place is to see the classes in session as one walks leisurely through the campus about eight o'clock in the morning. Under mango trees, pipal trees, and banyan trees scattered here and there are the classes and the teachers, seated and busily concentrating on their work. If it is algebra, there is a large movable blackboard arranged for the purpose. It may be history or reading; whatever it is, there sit the boys and girls robed in that beautiful color, peacefully and comfortably at work under the trees. The school is unusual for the reason that coeducation has been tried and has proved successful. Boys and girls grow up accustomed to sit in the same classes and to talk normally with each other. If one student has a talent for music, that talent is developed and given every opportunity. Indian music at its best has been revived and made an important part of the curriculum. If some other student has a talent for art, that talent is developed. Probably

the best teachers of India are found here in this school. Poetry, music, the drama, and religion are all emphasized, and the atmosphere of the place is one of spiritual high-mindedness.

Nalini sat under the chatim tree sketching. She had been at the Abode of Peace now for three months. She felt that in coming she had taken the first courageous step toward the freedom which she prized so highly. Her parents could not understand why she wanted to leave the city. She tried to explain to them that the stream of her life had changed; that she had a purpose, and wished to have a larger preparation than that which mere books and the passing of examinations would give her. She would of course have to pass examinations, but she felt that she had a talent in art, and the best place in all India to develop it was at the Abode of Peace. She was accustomed to spend much of her time in serious reading, and in learning of the great social reconstruction work that was going on in the villages near by. She had herself volunteered to teach in some of the outcaste villages. She

By V. S. Masoji

YOUNG WOMEN STUDENTS REVIVE THE OLD DAGGER PLAY

was realizing more and more that she must be a living example of one who believed that the condition of caste must be completely done away with before India could have freedom. If one group of people were limited by another group, that was slavery. No one would be free until all were free. She believed this with all her soul, and when she was reading or writing, painting or studying, this was the current of her thinking.

Letters from home were vastly different from what Nalini had expected. Father had greatly changed, there was no doubt about that. Think of father dressed in *khaddar!* "Please send me a snapshot," she wrote mother. Father took it all so seriously that she would not dare to joke with him about the matter. Had mother taken to wearing *khaddar* too, and were all the servants draped in homespun as well? If father believed in *khaddar* so thoroughly, would he demand that his children wear it when they came home? She knew that she was the only child who did not wear it. Gopal had been a devotee of Gandhi as long as Nalini could remember.

But somehow girls didn't rally to that banner as easily as boys. She wondered why it was. Perhaps it was because they knew deep down in their hearts that there were so many other wrongs that must be righted first—that they must work from within the family circle. Nalini wrote many letters home. Often, after writing for hours, she would tear them up, and the waste basket would be the grateful receiver of her evening's labors. Gopal was not the recipient of many letters, but her occasional ones to him were revealing. In one she wrote:

DEAR GOPIE:

This place is heaven. I adore every tree and every leaf, every bird and every building, only I am thankful that we spend little time inside the buildings. We sleep and eat inside, and that is about all. The poet we see now and then, and a few days ago he addressed us at the early morning chapel. My mind is stretching so, I very much fear it is going to snap. I never dreamed there was so much to learn. Do you remember my telling you of the shock I had at learning about money-

lenders? I began to learn about some of their cruelty when I was at Ushagram. There they told me of a Christian family which ten years ago had borrowed ten rupees. Every month for ten years the family had paid interest on that debt, but it was never enough to satisfy the money-lender, and when the bishop came around to hold the conference, the family still owed two hundred and forty rupees. They were so discouraged because all their future was mortgaged, and they did not see any hope ahead. The bishop paid the bill for the family and told them to start out anew and never again borrow one cent of a money-lender, nor get into debt to the *zamindar*. For that reason I am learning to be a banker! That's the only urge I have for arithmetic and algebra. For years now the poet's school has been the center for cooperative banks for the villages—where the sweepers and the Brahmans and all the intervening castes pool their resources and turn a cold shoulder on the money-lender. Our students and teachers have gone out into the near-by villages, and have reduced the number of cases of malaria

by eighty per cent. And it has been accomplished by teaching them how to dig proper drains for the village, and by teaching them sanitation and hygiene. We have persuaded them to work together to widen the streets. This has given the children more space for play, and has saved many hundreds of lives.

Be prepared to receive a great blow, Gopie. Your sister has decided she is not interested in politics. You and the Mahatma may burn all the foreign cloth you like, and you may swathe yourself in *khaddar*. I will, too, if you will send it to me, but seriously, I have no desire to be a politician. What I want to do is help make over some of these villages, and give the boys and girls in them some freedom. Life in a village may sound to you as if it were free, my city brother, but the village children are slaves—slaves to custom, slaves to tradition, slaves to the money-lender, slaves to the upper castes, slaves to the superstition of their religion. What they need is freedom, and that is what I want to help them to get.

This is a strong epistle, but it is not one-

third of all that is bursting for utterance in my little head.

Tell mother I'm the only girl here with short hair; they all have the privilege of cutting it if they want to, but they don't seem to want to. They take part in lovely plays and pageants, and they tell me I shall look absurdly out of place with such boyish hair, so I shall let mine grow.

Yours for freedom,

NALINI

Chapter VII

A FUNERAL BY THE GANGES

GOPAL tolerated Benares; he did not love it. There would never be another city whose very smoke and fog he could love as he did those of Calcutta. He would never think of Benares other than as he thought of it that first morning he had looked upon it—a citadel of the ancients. It was not that there were not great movements breaking out from the old strongholds of Benares; Gopal took part in these new movements every day of his stay there. But when he left his comrades he stepped down two thousand years into his grandfather's mind and home. This other-worldliness sounded very well, written up in magazines. He had perused many a book now being read in the Western world, glorifying it. Ugh! As for him, he felt his call as every true son of India did, to be concerned with making this world a fit place for humanity to live in, and to live in cooperatively. He

felt a sincere tenderness for his old grandfather, however, and often showed it in devoted service. In spite of the fact that he was a university student, he would often take the huge umbrella, walk silently down to the *ghats* with the tottering old gentleman, and stand for hours, holding the umbrella over him while his grandfather lost himself in the mumbling of his *mantras* and in mystic worship.

Gopal had been in Benares a full year. The calendar showed it. Each day he had marked off with a blue pencil, believing that it marked one day less of banishment. His father's letters were more affectionate than formerly. Evidently the great change of heart that Nalini and his mother had written about was having an effect upon his attitude toward his son. Gopal could endure such a change, he thought, especially if with it came a summons to go home. Yet he realized that it would be cruel to leave the dear old grandfather now, even though the parental authority should release him from exile. The old servant could look after his physical wants,

but he needed the presence of someone who loved him and belonged to him. Indeed, as his grandfather grew old and weaker, he spent more and more time at the *ghats,* until the day came when he asked Gopal to take him to his favorite spot on the bank of the Ganges and leave him there. He begged him to build a little thatched roof over him and let him remain there night and day until the hour came when he should be received into the arms of Mother Ganga. Gopal knew that when an aged Hindu made this request the time of his death was drawing near, and while making the preparations to take his grandfather to the river side, he also telegraphed his father that the end was approaching.

Building a thatched roof canopy was a trying task for Gopal, yet he stayed to help as much as he could, for, strangely, the old gentleman did not want him to leave his side for a moment. Shocked as he was by the youth's drastic beliefs, he seemed to have a deep affection for him. As for Nalini, the fact that she had gone to Tagore's school to study, or to any school, for that matter, was a daily and almost

hourly trial to him. Nalini was now fifteen and should have been married two years before. What would become of their motherland if all the young people took affairs into their own hands as Nalini and Gopal were doing? No civilization could stand such an upheaval. There must be something wrong in this Western education to make them so daring and so revolutionary in regard to Hindu customs. This was the burden of the old gentleman's subconscious dreams, yet when he was most awake he could not be affectionate enough to his attentive grandson.

Upon the receipt of Gopal's telegram, Justice Roy sent word to Nalini to meet her mother and himself at Burdwan. From that junction they would go together by the Punjab Mail to Benares.

Nalini put a few belongings into a small suitcase, rolled up her bedding, and took the bus to the station at Bolpur. Her friends, knowing how uncertain a girl's school life is, feared when they bade her good-by that this would mean she would not return. Her own

mind was confused; not for herself, but as to how she would react to all of the experiences that would come to her.

When her train reached Burdwan dark had fallen, and she found her father on the platform, anxiously watching every open door of the train. Mother was in the first-class waiting room, he told her, and she forthwith went to find her. Paler than usual her mother seemed, more poised but more reticent. The train would come along now shortly and they would get on. Father had reserved a compartment so that they might have privacy. Mother and Nalini would sleep in the lower berth, and father would take the upper. They were kept waiting in the station for over an hour. Nalini, having had nothing to eat since morning, begged her father to take her to the station restaurant, where she had tea and toast. The thought of eating in a public place, not knowing whether a Brahman hand had prepared the food nor how it had been prepared, was more than her Brahman mother could endure. She begged them to tell her nothing about it, as the thought was revolting. She

would remain in retirement in the ladies' waiting room.

The train roared out of the station, making so much noise that conversation was out of the question. The trio did not want to sleep, and yet the things they wished to talk about could not be shouted, they were too intimate. Father unrolled the bedding hold-alls and spread them on the two berths. All three sat until far into the night on the lower berth. They turned out the light in their compartment, turned on the electric fan, and sat looking out upon the brilliant moonlit fields. There were no people moving in the villages, and no lights in the houses. Now and then a tank could be seen, and in its motionless water the moon and the palm trees were reflected. At last all three decided they must try to get some rest, and so they lay down.

Nalini slept little; there was too much to think about. And at the first station after daybreak, when she heard, *"Cha, cha, chota hazri,"* she arose, dressed, and made herself ready for the day. At every station thereafter she was out, walking up and down, looking at

the scenery and people and at the things they displayed for sale. Moghal Serai was one of the most interesting stations. Before the train came to a full stop there were vendors at the train windows, holding up hand-carved tables, knives, books and wood bookends, food, and toys of all descriptions—frogs dangling on strings, and little idols made of plaster but gayly decorated. After a half hour in this hot station the train moved on.

"Kashi, Kashi," the guard called out in rhythmic chant.

"Kashi, the gate to heaven," Nalini thought, and there before her flowed the Ganges, the holy Mother Ganga, and yonder towered the city, built like a fortress hugging the banks of the sacred river. She was looking at last upon the famous old city of Benares.

Gopal was at the station to meet them, and took them to his grandfather's home in a carriage. Nalini was glad that the horses jogged along slowly, so that she could look about and see the varied life of this fascinating place.

The family arrived but a few hours before the old saint breathed his last. He had an op-

portunity to speak to his son, and to give his blessing to Gopal. His request had been that he might die by the sacred water, and so he was content to spend his last conscious hours there on the spot that he loved so well—he believed his spirit would the sooner approach the Nirvana where he longed to be.

The burning *ghat* was some little distance down the river, and the loved ones carried the body there, covering it with coarse white grave cloth, and placed it on the pile of wood prepared for the burning. Nalini and her mother departed, according to custom, while several other distant relatives came and chanted the funeral prayers that accompany the burning. The son and grandson and the male relatives sat just above the fire where the body was enveloped in flames. The crackling of the hot firewood, the lap of the oars of boats as they passed, and the low chanting of the funeral dirge by the mourners watching the last embers of the precious body, were the only sounds that broke the stillness.

And when the fire had died away, the ashes of the sainted grandfather were gathered up

and strewn on the waters of Mother Ganga, which was his desire, as it is the desire of every orthodox Hindu. The little group finally returned home—home to the plain, empty house of the grandfather. They talked about him, and ate the plain rice of mourners, and talked of plans for the ten days of mourning which they would spend at Benares.

During these days their program was prescribed by age-old custom and tradition. Every morning the son and grandson would get up at dawn, have their ceremonial bath in the Ganges, then go barefooted to call on the men who were the old man's friends. In the afternoon these men would return the calls, and the son and grandson would receive them at the *asram*. The family food consisted merely of the *havishyanna*—one simple meal of rice and vegetables boiled together with butter and salt in one pot. Every social rule of courtesy was carried out, and all the rigorous ceremonials were performed that are prescribed for a son in the event of his father's death.

To Gopal's deep joy, they told him that

he was to go with them and never return to Benares unless he desired.

"Nalini," he said when the two were alone, "never do anything for which you will have to be punished for twelve long months."

"I shall probably do something so absurd that I shall be serving out my sentence for years."

"Don't be foolish, little one; I have been through a very serious year, and I want you to appreciate the fact. You seem to have gone scot free since the Durga *puja*. If Nanda Lal were not such a fine fellow, think what might have happened to you. You would be a little girl back in the village home, assisting mother-in-law in cooking *luchees,* and your *sandesh* would be the admiration of the clan. You may thank me for making the hit with Nanda Lal."

"I shall be indebted to you until my dying day, Gopie. But who knows even now what may happen to both Nanda Lal and me? Do you think I might ever be allowed to talk to him, some time when no one but you and mother knows about it?"

"I predict now, to be safe, that when you and Nanda Lal become acquainted with each other, you and he will be scrapping just as you and I do."

"I'm willing," retorted Nalini, with a toss of her boyish head, and ended the conversation by leaving him.

Father spent most of his evenings on the little veranda alone in quiet meditation. The remainder of the family would usually be found on the roof, where there was nothing above them but the beautiful sky and the white moonlight. Looking up into the sky, Nalini broke the silence: "The poet says that our chief teachers should be the open spaces, the trees, the dawn, the evening, moonlight, the winds, and the great rains"—and she drank in the beauty and felt herself at that moment in harmony with God's glorious creation.

They talked of immortality, and of the transmigration of souls, which Gopal flatly denied. They talked of sorrow and happiness, and whether anyone had a right to happiness.

"What right have I to happiness," asked

Gopal, "when ninety-eight thousand people in the city of Calcutta have no place to lay their heads at night except the sidewalk? What right have I to luxury when the sweepers of the city haven't enough wages to feed the mouths of their babies? Has anyone the right to anything that he does not share with those who need it?"

Nalini knew very little of her brother's religious life, but he talked as though he had had a vital experience. She wondered whether Buddha had influenced him—she knew that Sarnath, the old Buddhist city, was not far from Benares, and that there were many monks there now, trying to revive interest among the Hindus towards Buddhism. But Gopal had gone beyond Hinduism and Buddhism into the life of the Man of Galilee.

Chapter VIII

NALINI FOLLOWS THE GLEAM

A LITTLE group of mourners clad in sackcloth stepped from the Delhi express to the platform at Howrah station. It was the lazy early morning hour. The baggage coolies were scarcely awake; the shrill whistle of the incoming train had shocked them into activity, until now they were crowding about every door and window of the train. Three men were striving to snatch each piece of luggage. Two finally lifted what it seemed to Nalini four should have borne, but she walked quietly with the others to the closed carriage which was awaiting them.

Before they reached the carriage they had already heard about the sweepers' strike, news of which was being carried as by electric waves all over the city. A young Brahman woman was said to be leading it. That this young woman had been educated in America was the rumor, and also that she believed that

even sweepers should have an adequate support and opportunity. It stirred Gopal and Nalini to the depths. They wanted to enter the ranks at once beside this courageous woman.

Once they had reached home, they felt able to throw off the gloom that had surrounded them in Benares. Gopal's heart was lighter than ever before, not more frivolous, but more in harmony with his surroundings. He and Nalini saw that their mother was in a state of bewilderment over their talk about the sweepers striking.

"What are the sweepers striking? What does that mean, Gopal?" she asked, almost as soon as they had entered the house.

"It is this, mother," answered Gopal. "All through the years the sweepers have done their work faithfully. The wages for all lines of work have increased with the rise in the price of rice, but the sweepers have been unable to get more than their eight annas a day, in spite of everything. So the only way they could speak to Calcutta was to strike—that is, just leave their work undone in the city for

a few days, so that both high and low, rich and poor, would realize how important their work was. Our cities cannot live without sweepers. People say there is a remarkable young woman, a Miss Ghose, who has encouraged them and held them together, and is going to help them to win."

"A woman? What can a woman do?" asked his mother.

"What can't she do?" snapped Gopal. "She can do more than a man about such things, once an Indian woman gets started. The sweepers' children can't get enough to eat, and their mothers often feed them opium to satisfy their hunger, as well as to keep them quiet while the mothers work. That is what it means to be a sweeper, mother. And that is why women ought to be out in the world helping to set right these wrongs that have hung over us a few thousand years too long."

Nalini was deeply disappointed because they did not find Nanda Lal at Calcutta to greet them. How did he look? Did he wear *khaddar* or not? She had supposed he had become a member of the family, but evidently

not. She would have to go back to Shantiniketan without knowing how he looked. At the Durga *puja* festival she had been veiled when Nanda Lal was in the room, and all these months, each time he came, something had strangely occurred to keep her from seeing him.

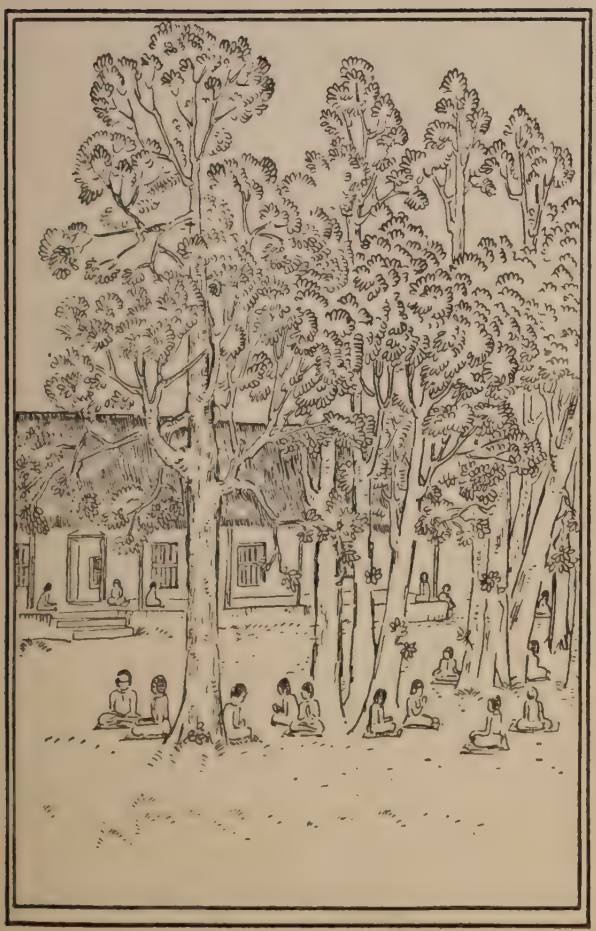
Nalini had done a good deal of thinking about life and God and our relationship to God ever since that festival. Her experience seemed to her to be wide, and she felt that she had a right to opinions of her own. Gopal always seemed a little ahead of her in his ideas, and she looked up to him in spite of his teasing. She had asked him for his Bible, and she had read a good deal of it, especially the story of Esther and the entire New Testament. It had thrilled and challenged her, and it still held her as though it were a magnet.

The authority of the family finally yielded to Nalini's desire to go back to Bolpur. Having once had a taste of freedom there, she felt that her real life was only now beginning. The days were so inspiring at Shantiniketan. Coeducation, which most of the Indian people

whom she knew talked about in whispers, here proved itself normal and beautiful. Nalini prepared to return, and father and Gopal accompanied her.

Just as they stepped off the train at Bolpur a young man came up to greet Gopal. Nalini knew immediately who it was. Gopal introduced them formally, and Nalini felt her heart beat so fast she could not speak. It seemed impossible that she could not speak when there was so much she had planned during the months to say. Nanda Lal, too, was somewhat silent and a little embarrassed. He explained that he had come to Shantiniketan for some special studies. "From now on, Nalini," he said smiling, "you and I are going to be just a normal boy and girl who are free."

At Shantiniketan Nalini did not have to think of rules; she was forced to think of principles and decide for herself. First, should she study for an A.B.? Many of her friends were doing so, and there were the classes within arm's reach. She took months to think it over, and then she announced her decision of studying what would best fit her for spe-



By V. S. Masoji

THE HOUR OF MEDITATION AT SHANTINIKETAN

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY

cial reconstruction work among the villagers. She wanted history and literature, but she also wanted family diet, the care of babies, first aid, sanitation in the village and what to do in time of epidemics, how to start a cooperative bank and how to run it. These were vital to Nalini's life's work and these things she would pursue. Then, too, art work had greatly inspired her. If she had any message for the world outside of her village welfare work she would express it on canvas. The pictures of the artist Nanda Lal Bose had stirred her deeply; many artists had spoken to her from their pictures, and these had helped to direct her future. One of her thoughts she did not trust to any letter, but wrote it in her diary.

May 2, 1929
The Abode of Peace

Today I went early to the art gallery. It has been my habit of late to go once a day and study the subjects which the artists have chosen for their works. I shall never be a great artist, but I shall always appreciate art. But what should I choose for my great theme

if I should master the technique of painting? Would I dare to expose my own soul to the world and paint what is in my very self? Is that what artists do, never caring what petty people may say about them, or how their work reveals themselves? I dare not put in a letter to mother what I feel about her life, but I have found a picture which expresses it. I tremble as I write it down. It would hurt mother if she knew her portrait were painted here, but it is. And the portrait of the women like mother who are in purdah—how did the artist know so well? I am now sitting in my bedroom, but every line of that picture is indelibly traced on the retina of my eye (if that's the name of the part of the eye that takes impressions—haven't studied much physiology yet). There is a little picture hanging in the gallery, called The Marble Prison. The background of the piece is a white marble palace. Its screens are carved so fine that the marble looks like lace, and its walls are inlaid with semi-precious stones. The floor, too, is of white marble, so glossy that reflections may be seen in it. In the

center of the picture stands a woman. It is a beautiful figure; she is slender and graceful, plainly well born and carefully reared. Her hands are those of an artist and exquisitely kept. Her face is classic. It is almost as white as the marble; the red or rather pink lips are the only color in the picture. As I look at her she seems to grow more and more illusory. She stands in a cage of marble, but a cage nevertheless. That is a picture of my darling mother. She is in prison. True, it is a marble prison, but she cannot get out of it; even though the key is handed to her, she cannot make it fit the lock, and she is there forever. O God, I shall never let mother see this page. But if she must stay in the prison, if her traditions are so strong that she cannot get out, help me to make the prison interesting to her. But help me to blow it to bits before the next generation has an inhabitant in the cage. A marble prison—a marble prison!

Sports day is always exciting at Shantiniketan. Both girls and boys enter into the

sports as eagerly as they do into the dramatization of the poet's plays. There are races of every description, and then the prizes, which consist of soaps and soap boxes, tooth brushes and tooth paste, mirrors—for the girls only, of course—brushes, lanterns, and many other things of equal utility.

Nalini and all her friends were in the games. When she ran in ahead at the end of the potato race, who should be holding the cord but Nanda Lal. He was grateful for this natural opportunity to talk to her, but he was so embarrassed that he could not think what to say. Next he tried to introduce some of the young men near, and he didn't know what to call her, so he just said "Miss Roy" in English.

"I see you have won a lantern as a prize," ventured Nalini, trying to start the conversation.

"That is to keep the snakes away at night. And you have received a mirror; that is appropriate," attempting to be facetious.

"No," said Nalini, "that is to drive away the evil spirits; when they see what is reflected in

that mirror they will not trouble me. It will be clear gain to have you on the campus, I see that. You will add another light," pointing to his lantern.

And so the bantering continued until after the last game, when the two walked back from the athletic field together as naturally as if they had been brother and sister.

That was the first of many long walks and talks to which they both looked forward. First they talked about lessons, then about the poet and his poems, then about their families, then about their aims and ambitions. The more they confided to each other, the more alike they seemed to be, and the more alike in purpose their lives seemed to be growing. One day Nanda Lal had talked for hours on the dream of his life, when he begged Nalini to tell hers. She was loath to tell it; somehow she felt a constraint, she said. But one afternoon she described to him the vision through which had come her call to "the open highway," as she expressed it.

"There was a light at the end of the city's street. At first the light was hazy and indis-

tinguishable. Then it seemed to take the form of a man. A great white circular light was about his head. His face was kindly, but deeply thoughtful and almost sad. Educated men were reaching toward him from all sides, some to get a glance from his eye, some to listen to the words that fell from his lips. As the mists cleared away his hands appeared, and they were bleeding. Our village and city children were rushing from the crowded villages and from the huge, noisy mills, from everywhere, seeking to have him lay his hands on their heads. He tried to touch them, but he could not reach them all and looked so hurt about it. Then I noticed his feet; they, too, were bleeding, and masses of our depressed people were rushing to touch them. 'Just to touch his feet,' they said, 'would put new life into us; it would give us hope.' I listened. He was saying to the educated men, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' As he bent over to bless the children with his bleeding hands, his voice rang out, 'Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' I saw him stoop to

take the hands of the depressed people to help them stand, and he said so kindly, 'Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' That is my dream, my gleam. I can see all those children of the cities and villages whom he could not reach, in a picture of longing before me. My dream is to help them get near enough so that his hands can touch them and bless them and free them."

Nanda Lal was silent. It was a clearer vision than his own, and he knew in his heart that he would strive to follow it, and to follow it with Nalini, to the end.

Meanings of Indian Words

ALMIRAH. Cupboard, cabinet, wardrobe.
ANNA. One-sixteenth of a rupee; about two cents.
ASRAM. A place of religious retreat.
BRAHMAN. The priestly, or highest, caste of Hinduism. Also, a member of that caste.
CHA. Tea.
CHARKHA. Spinning wheel.
DHOTI. Draped cloth worn instead of trousers.
DIWALI. Festival of Lights.
GHATS. A flight of steps leading to the river edge.
HAZRI. Breakfast. *Chota hazri,* little breakfast (like the French *petit déjeuner*), a light morning repast.
HOOKAH. The common pipe in India for tobacco smoking, the smoke being drawn through a bowl of water.
—JI. An honorific suffix, applicable at will.
KHADDAR. Homespun cotton cloth.
LUCHEE. A pancake.
MAHATMA. Great-souled.
MAIDAN. The central park of Calcutta.
MANTRA. A sacred verse from the Hindu scriptures.
MELA. A religious festival.
MOFUSSIL. Interior of the country.
PAN. A mixture of betel leaf and lime for chewing.
PANCHAYAT. Village council of five elders.
PUJA. Offerings and prayers to the gods.
PURDAH. Curtain or veil. General term for the custom of secluding women.

Meanings of Indian Words (Continued)

PURDAHNASINS. Women who live within purdah.

RUPEE. The standard monetary unit of India, worth about thirty-seven cents.

SADHU. A Hindu holy man.

SAHIB. Master. Corresponds to the English Mr., but follows the surname.

SANDESH. A Bengali sweet.

SARI. Draped garment worn by Indian women.

ZAMINDAR. Landlord.

Date Due

JAN 5

GTU Library
3 2400 00714 0498

LIBRARY RULES

1. **No book may be taken from the library without being charged to the borrower.** Borrowers are responsible for any damage done to the volumes while in their possession and are expected to make good all losses.
2. (a) **Reserve Books** may be borrowed for a period of two hours. In case no call has been made in the interval, books may be renewed for a second two hours. (Where there is only one copy, book must be used in the library.)

   (b) Reserve books taken at 10 p. m. Mondays to Fridays are due at 9 a. m. the next morning. A reserve book taken from the library at 12 m. Saturday is due at 9 a. m. the following Monday.
3. Books not on reserve may be drawn from the library for two weeks and may be renewed once for the same period, except one-day books.
4. A fine of two cents a day will be charged on each book which is not returned according to the above rule.
5. **MAGAZINES ARE NOT** to be taken from the library without the special permission of the librarian.

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall

MT20.3
F53

20823